

PERFORMANCE!



The Newsletter of the Society of American Archivists’ Performing Arts Roundtable

Issue for Winter-Spring 2005

[The Performing Arts Roundtable: Encourages the exchange of information on historical and contemporary documentation of music, dance, theater, motion pictures, and other performance media. (from the SAA Web site)]

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Message from the Roundtable Chair

Creating a More Dynamic Roundtable

By Karen Spicher

Our Roundtable activities reflect the depth and range of our membership, and the willingness of members to share expertise. The present newsletter issue continues this standard, incorporating articles on national and international dance collections and cutting-edge audio technology. Also of note is the availability of back issues of the newsletter on our new website (<http://www.archivists.org/saagroups/performart/index.html>). And the website is a place to look for other news of Roundtable activities and resources, and to contribute images from your collections. Many thanks to George Bain and Ashley Yandle for their hard work on the newsletter and website. And I want to express special thanks to Bridget Carr, whose term as Roundtable chair is ending this August. Bridget has served as chair since 2002, and during her term has revitalized the group with her support for meeting programming and member participation.

Looking ahead to this summer, SAA's annual conference will be held in New Orleans, August 14-21, 2005. The Performing Arts Roundtable meeting will be on Thursday, August 18, 4:00-5:30 p.m., and will include a presentation by guest speaker Rachel Lyons, archivist of the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival. Please plan to join us for what promises to be a very interesting look at this important New Orleans arts institution.

During the business portion of our August meeting, we will need to appoint or elect a new co-chair, to serve a staggered term through August 2007. Please consider nominating yourself or a colleague, either at the meeting or by emailing me ahead of time (karen.spicher@yale.edu). Co-chairing is an excellent way to serve the Roundtable and contribute to our continued growth.

Watch the website and summer newsletter for more information about our annual meeting!

News Notes

News Items for the New Orleans Conference

The SAA Performing Arts Roundtable will conduct its annual meeting at the conference in New Orleans on Wednesday, August 18 from 4-5:30 p.m. Check the conference information booklet in New Orleans for place.

Following the business meeting there will be a presentation by Rachel Lyons, the archivist with the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival. Look for more details in the summer issue of the newsletter.

Performing Arts Roundtable's Web Site Has Opened

Following work by web master Ashley Yandle of the North Carolina State Archives, the SAA Performing Arts Roundtable's web site opened in early 2005. The site, nested within the SAA web site, may be viewed at < <http://www.archivists.org/saagroups/performart/index.html>>. Check it out--then put it to use, and think of actively supplying information so it works for you!

More specifically, Yandle is interested in receiving announcements to be posted and for more images for inclusion in the image gallery section of the web site.

American Music Month

November is American Music Month. And Scott Schwartz at the Sousa Archives and American Music Center at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign has been using the designation to promote sounds from the archives. Are other performing arts archives using the month in a similar fashion? If so, please inform your co-chairs or editor. A more detailed survey may be in order.

Reports from the Field

Editor's Note: This section is intended to be an avenue for the exchange of information to members of the roundtable about collections or other topics of importance for archivists in or with the performing arts.

The first of the two reports in this issue looks at the archives of the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival in western Massachusetts. At the conference that concluded the NIPAD program held in Miami, FL in June 2002 (reported in the Summer 2002 issue) Norton Owen stood out as a respected leader, a veteran who became an archivist through the back door but whose interest in and concern for his organization's records of enduring value was quite evident. His article looks at the efforts to provide an educational outreach for the archives at Jacob's Pillow. The second report looks at the rapidly changing field of audio technology. James Sam, who is a young professional, summarizes a very technical subject in a very succinct fashion.

Jacob's Pillow

By Norton Owen

Although I am sometimes given credit for single-handedly building the Jacob's Pillow

Archives, that credit rightfully belongs to our founder, modern dance pioneer Ted

Shawn, as I once detailed in an essay for *Performing Arts Resources* ("Accidental Acquisitions: The Jacob's Pillow Archive Collection," Volume Twenty, 1996). That essay fully chronicled the growth of the Archives up until that point, but only one short paragraph anticipated the enormous changes that would be brought about by opening our doors to the general public as we moved into a new home in Blake's Barn. As the Pillow now prepares to enter its tenth season providing public access to our collection, I am happy to take this opportunity to reflect on what has been accomplished.

I cannot overestimate the changes that have come about since the time we opened the doors of the Archives to the public. While we had never exactly tried to keep our resources a secret, I have come to realize how important it is to make materials visible to the everyday visitor. One needn't worry too much about attracting scholars and dance specialists, as they will unerringly find their way. First-time visitors to our Western Massachusetts campus, however, might have had a difficult time in past years finding the Archives. Or, perhaps more to the point, there might be little reason why the general public would be motivated to visit the Archives.

One of the busiest times in the Archives each day is the hour before performance...

We have worked consistently to set up a system of seemingly endless opportunities for our audiences to deepen their involvement, offering greater levels of engagement to meet our guests at every conceivable level of interest. Situating our box office in the same 18th-century structure that houses the main exhibition area and Archives provides the first chance to attract

newcomers. Newly-expanded hours this summer will ensure that the Archives are open at virtually anytime that people might be visiting the box office, and our large barn doors will be open to reveal changing exhibitions. (This summer, Rose Eichenbaum's *Masters of Movement: Portraits of America's Great Choreographers* will be on the walls.)

Anyone browsing in Blake's Barn encounters a large opening into the Archives Reading Room, with strategically placed video monitors, shelves of dance books, and more wall-mounted photos beckoning. Once in the Reading Room, visitors are encouraged to browse through binders of photos (reproductions, not originals) and may either view one of the videos constantly playing on four different viewing stations or request a special screening from the catalog of some 4000 options.

One of the busiest times in the Archives each day is the hour before performance, when crowds are on the grounds looking for something to do until curtain time. They are drawn to Blake's Barn especially for pre-performance talks given by our scholars-in-residence, usually attracting about 100 listeners to an open-air deck out back, with amplified sound in the Barn's exhibition space so that additional listeners may view the exhibit while listening to background information on the upcoming performance.

For the visitor who may have managed to approach one of the three performance spaces without first experiencing the offerings in Blake's Barn, other archival surprises await. A Welcome Center just outside our largest venue includes a permanent installation mapping the history of Jacob's Pillow, with vintage photos and the institutional history boiled down to a few brief paragraphs. There are small changing

exhibitions in each of our theater lobbies, with attention paid to making a strong visual impact for those not inclined to notice the details of exactly what might be hanging on the walls. The printed program contains a three-page overview of the Pillow's first 72 seasons, specially-commissioned program notes link the performance to the venue, and Executive Director Ella Baff always greets audiences from the stage to remind them that Jacob's Pillow recently became the first (and so far only) dance institution to be named a National Historic Landmark. While all these efforts considered collectively may sound like overkill, the approach is low-key, and the casual atmosphere allows our visitors to add to their knowledge whether they are seasoned dance-goers or novices.

Perhaps I am especially attuned to the non-specialist since I came to my own interest in dance history relatively late. In fact, it was at the Pillow in 1976 when I was a student dancer that I first understood just how entwined past and present could be. The accompanist for my ballet classes was Jess Meeker, who had been the composer and accompanist for Ted Shawn's company of Men Dancers, the stalwart group who literally built Jacob's Pillow in the 1930s. The opportunity to chat informally with Jess after class was a revelatory experience, and suddenly I understood that whether the past was written in books or revealed in humorous personal anecdotes, it could open up entire new worlds.

Since my own summer of discovery almost 30 years ago, I have endeavored to find as many ways as possible to share my love of dance history. I first started bridging the gap between past and present when I worked in the box office in 1977. A presentation of Denishawn reconstructions that summer seemed the perfect opportunity to show off some of the costumes stashed in various

storage areas on campus, and so I mounted my first exhibition in a corner of the studio, using mannequins borrowed from a local department store. When I started working in the press office the following summer, I had to consult the Archives to locate photographs and answer questions concerning past performances by current artists. I soon became the de facto archivist, although my title didn't reflect that until 1991 when I became the part-time Director of Preservation.

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Invaluable assistance has been provided along the way from many individuals and resources, starting with a 1982 NEH grant that allowed for an archival survey to be conducted by Helen Samuels of MIT. Leslie Hansen Kopp's Preserve Inc. gave important strategic advice in the early 90s and even set up shop on the Pillow grounds from 1992 to 1995. Around the same time, we were invited to join the Dance Heritage Coalition, and this association has proven to be an invaluable lifeline ever since. A grant from the now sadly-defunct NIPAD (National Initiative to Preserve America's Dance) in 1996 allowed us to accomplish some of the important groundwork allowing for public access, and the addition of an archival intern position that same year has brought in much-needed manpower. The Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation enabled us to engage the services of Mary Edsall for an important year-long project in 1998 to complete the computerization of our finding aid and assist with other important transitions, and the Delmas Foundation has continued to provide important sustenance for our efforts.

Those interested in learning more about our archival programs may consult the website <www.jacobspillow.org> or, better yet, come experience first hand what I have

described here. We are open Tuesdays through Sundays from noon until final curtain between June 21 and August 28, and year-round by appointment.

Norton Owen is Director of Preservation for Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, and was the Institute Director of the José Limón Dance Foundation for many years. He is the author of A Certain Place: The Jacob's Pillow Story and is a contributor to both Envisioning Dance on Film and Video and José Limón: An Unfinished Memoir. He has served as curator for dozens of dance-related exhibitions, is vice chairman of the Dance Heritage Coalition and a longtime panelist for the NY State Council on the Arts. In 2000, Dance/USA honored Owen with its Ernie Award, honoring "unsung heroes who have led exemplary lives in dance."

Trends in Sound Preservation and Digitization

By **James Sam**, The Cutting Corporation

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Currently, there is a great variable in recorded sound. To call the question of "how do we preserve the sounds of yesterday and today well into the future" unresolved is to vie for the understatement of the year. Soon, the means of yesterday will no longer work, and a new approach must be taken. Meanwhile, almost every large institution is proceeding differently, all having their advantages and shortcomings. Thus, any decisions regarding the preservation of audio must be informed and account for past, present, and future trends.

Where We've Been

It has been over fifty years since magnetic analog tape came into the audio world. Over time it matured and became a stable medium, changing from a noisy, tinny ribbon carrying Nazi propaganda into a warm, dynamic medium that some still hold as the best fidelity possible. Even the toy,

dictating device cassette came just within the standard of high fidelity. It could be played back years after recording and if the audio was stored properly in ideal environmental conditions, little would be needed to be done to conserve the audio. So when audio needed to be preserved, either due to machine obsolescence or deterioration, the sound was recorded to tape to survive. Librarians and archivists around the world could make service copies for access and then simply store the original and not worry about the audio as the format appeared to be the best available at the time.

The last twenty of those years has seen the rise of digital audio. Compared to tape, its maturation is close to light speed. Starting well below CD quality, it is now a medium-independent format offering a variety of quality resolutions that can be copied virtually infinitely without audio

degradation. Digital audio is why the means of yesterday will not work, and why understanding its issues are crucial to making an important decision about sound collections.

Where We Are

Today, magnetic tape is on its final legs. Within the last five to ten years, advances in digital recording have caused tape to be used less and less, practically eliminating the music production demand for tape in the market. 3M stopped making audiotape. BASF/EMTEC folded and sold its formulas and machinery to various companies. Zonal stopped as well. Most recently, Quantegy (né Ampex) filed for bankruptcy, leaving its future in doubt. Smaller companies are rising out of this vacuum to supply professional audiotape, their future is uncertain. Yet, even that's a moot point as tape machines are becoming increasingly rare. Existing machines face moving parts that are wearing out and recording/playback heads that are losing their control over magnetic fields. While you can record something onto tape today, there's no guarantee it will be playable in thirty years.

Meanwhile, digital audio is far past the resolution of the compact disc and yet constantly evolving. We can measure digital audio in terms of sampling rate vs. bit-depth. Both are analogous (no pun intended—honestly) to the number of pixels on your computer monitor and the size of your TV—more is better and will produce finer detail. This is PCM encoding. Some common formats include:

- 44.1 kHz sampling rate with 16-bit depth Audio CD resolution
- 48 kHz sampling rate with 24-bit depth DVD-V audio resolution
- 96 kHz sampling rate with 24-bit depth “main” DVD-A audio resolution

- 192 kHz sampling rate with 24-bit depth highest DVD-A audio resolution

While Sony has worked with DSD encoding, introducing its Super Audio CD to compete with DVD-A discs, it is looking like they're going for an encore of Betamax.

On the hardware side, the equipment necessary to create high definition audio files is readily available. High quality converters cost less than \$500, and are constantly getting cheaper. This proliferation of equipment makes the creating of these files very easy and adds momentum to the speed in which all collections are digitized.

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The unique aspect of digital audio is that it is not dependent on the physical medium. The 44.1 kHz/16-bit file “Eleanor_Rigby.wav” is the same thing as track two on your CD copy of *Revolver*. Thus, many archives are finding it very convenient to store this digital audio on a computer hard drive in addition to, or in lieu of, a CD or CD-R. Imagining a hard drive with hundreds or thousands of these illustrates the problem of access and being able to identify and search for files quickly. The solution is metadata, which contains unique identifying information about the file and makes the file easier to find. As more and more sound recordings are converted (and completely new sounds are captured and stored digitally), this metadata will become even more vital.

Still, many archives are locked into the mindset of preserving the audio on an everlasting medium. Many are realizing the end of tape is near, but many are asking for “gold-dye” CD-Rs as either discs playable in

regular audio decks or as CD-ROMs with the audio stored as a high resolution computer file hoping this will be a stable format. Others are treating hard drives the same way they would analog tape, hoping that pulling them off the shelf years down the line everything will be as they left it.

Where We're Going

However, preservation practices are changing. With the acceptance of impending tape obsolescence, archivists are looking at the implications of having a data file only archive. It appears some practices are being agreed upon by many of the leading institutions.

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One agreement is that a 96 kHz/24-bit bit WAVE file is very good—it encompasses all the frequencies humans respond to, both aurally and otherwise, in a dynamic range technically beyond the limits of the ear. For access copies, these same folks suggest an MP3 file encoded at 256 kbps. Data compression makes the MP3 file smaller than the .wav file and the difference at that rate is nearly inaudible. Moreover, both WAVE and MP3 file formats are supported by virtually every audio player and editor available. So both scientific and market reasons back the adoption this theory.

That cannot be said for other formats. While it is possible to create files of even higher resolution, it is fairly unlikely that the archival community would adopt it in the foreseeable future. On the theoretical side, white papers have been published showing how 96 kHz, let alone 192 kHz, is overkill (i.e. “Sampling Theory For Digital Audio” by Dan Lavry of Lavry Engineering, Inc.).

On the pragmatic side, no consumer platform exists, thus there is no market demand for resolutions higher than 24-bit, and the 192 KHz sampling rate is limited in demand at best. Moreover, the sheer hard drive capacity to store 96 kHz/24-bit files, let alone 192 KHz/32-bit files, is enormous. For this exact reason, many archivists are recommending a smaller sampling rate (48 kHz) for spoken word recordings that are not as sonically demanding as musical ones.

A second agreement is it is incredibly shortsighted to remain focused on the concept of the everlasting medium. Much like tape machines, external hard-drives have moving parts, lubricants, and magnetic properties. Trying to access one ten, twenty years down the line and expecting flawless performance would be quite a gamble. At the same time, much like analog tape, writing digital files onto data CD-Rs is unreliable. No matter how well a CD-R is made, the data is still burned into an organic dye, which will eventually deteriorate. While fine for short-term delivery, neither medium being used for storage is either theoretically or proven reliable.

Instead, various experts, such as the 2005 Association of Record Sound Collections technical committee, have proposed that an IT-style data management system should be used for file storage. The file is in periodic use and frequently migrated to a new medium. Since the degradation in copying digital files is negligible to non-existent, the medium does not have to last forever, but the file does. Although expensive, smaller institutions are finding it possible to lease storage space from larger institutions, such as colleges.

Of course, that means a whole lot of extra work keeping track of those files. Re-enter metadata. Unfortunately, metadata is *not* one

of the things there is an agreement on. There are trends going towards that, but no one standard; yet. In the WAVE format there is no universal field for identifying information, so something else must be done.

Keeping the file around forever will require a much more active role for the archivist.

One prospect is the Broadcast Wave File (BWF). The Audio Engineering Society has suggested this as the prime candidate for digital delivery, and it has been in discussions frequently within the archival community. It is a format designed from WAVE to include extra-audio information in the header file in order to facilitate transfers between digital workstations in the broadcast industry, hence the name. Exactly how this chunk should be formatted is still up in the air, but suggestions are being made (i.e. the iXML chunk).

James Sam is a sound preservation engineer at The Cutting Corporation in Bethesda, MD. A musician since he was a child, he graduated in 2003 from the American University in Washington, DC with a B.S. in Audio Technology. Recently he co-wrote a paper presented at the 2005 Conference of the Association for Recorded Sound Collections, "WRVA Radio, the 'Voice of Virginia.'"

Guest Feature

The Summer 2004 issue of *Performance!* included a news note from Yukihiro Yoshida, a graduate student in dance at the University of Keio in Japan. Here this connection continues. Is the article below about dance or about archival matters? From the editor's viewpoint it includes both. It offers a perspective from another continent that, it is to be hoped, will prove of interest to performing arts archivists in North America, and will serve as a means for dialogue between performing arts archivists in North America and elsewhere.

Others are suggesting their own metadata/cataloging systems as well. The Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) has one method available to archives on their website. The Library of Congress has developed their Metadata Encoding and Transmission Standard (METS) that uses XML text either externally or embedded in the file.

Conclusions

What worked before will not work in the future. Where before preservation was based on the everlasting medium, it is a much wiser idea at this time to consider the everlasting file. Tape is dying, CD-Rs are still unproven, and hard drives are unreliable. Keeping the file around forever will require a much more active role for the archivist. Ultimately, though, it will allow for a copy of the audio, an artifact containing history, to remain accessible for future generations.

Documentation on Dance and Performance in Japan and Asia Pacific

By Yukihiro Yoshida

In Japan, documentation on music has been developed for years. In contrast, dance falls behind in that sense. Nevertheless, documentation on dance and performance has been studied in the Asia Pacific region. In this region, dance researchers recognize the importance of dance documentation.

In the dance world, the necessity of a Research Documentation Network has been discussed in the literature. Carl Wolz, the founder of World Dance Alliance, was one of pioneers in this field. In the following Wolz's paper, the importance and the vision of a Research Documentation Network in the dance world were pointed out. See his chapter on "Dance at the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, and Some Thoughts on International Networking" in Ruth Solomon and John Solomon, editors, *East Meets West in Dance: Voices in the Cross-Cultural Dialogue* (Harwood Academic Publishers, 1995). The World Dance Alliance Asia Pacific, based in the Asia Pacific region, is a branch of the World Dance Alliance. Its Research Documentation Network is an important structure for conducting this dialogue.

In the Asia Pacific region there are many kinds of traditional dance, some of which are recognized by UNESCO as World Cultural Heritage forms. These traditional Asian forms have different documentation requirements from Western dances. The Japanese traditional dance form Noh, for

example, was recently registered as a World Cultural Heritage resource. Now the documentation on Noh is in the process of development. At the same time, however, the Japanese postmodern dance form, "Butoh" is also an important resource for the history of dance. The materials on the founder of Butoh, Tatsumi Hijikata (1928-1986), has been archived since the 1990s (see the URL: <http://www.art-c.keio.ac.jp/Hijikata/index.html>) by the Keio University Research Center for the Art(s) and Arts Administration. Butoh has original documentation called "Butoh-fu." As this differs from Western dance documentation such as Labanotation, it can be said that researchers need to understand the differences between West and Asia and to study the differences.

In the Asia Pacific region there are many kinds of traditional dance...

Beyond these examples from Japan, it is important for researchers to study documentation on each regional traditional arts form. There are also many important contemporary dance forms in the Asia Pacific region. They are mostly the products of cross-cultural activity. The Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Committee on Culture and Information report *The Dances of ASEAN* (1998) discusses this at length.

...it is important for researchers to study documentation on each regional traditional arts form.

Some products of Asia Pacific are based on this difference and they cover an interesting world made more useful with methodologies of Ethnology. For instance, in his chapter “Towards Better Documentation of Music Making” in *Dance and Music in South Asian Drama* (1981), the Japanese scholar Osamu Yamaguchi goes beyond recorded materials to study live material such as improvisation through the perspectives of Ethnology. And

another Japanese scholar, Hitoshi Matsushita, also has suggested an interesting view on documentation and its background by exploring cross-cultural differences. Matsushita is active in the Japanese branch of IAML (the International Association of Music Libraries, Archives and Documentation Centres). See his two contributions to *National Workshop for Documentation and Preservation of Non-Physical Cultural Heritage in Thailand* (Asia/Pacific Culture Centre for UNESCO, 1994) for more details on his ideas.

Editor's Corner

Your Newsletter

With the Performing Arts Roundtable's web site now launched, it is to be hoped roundtable members will use it to post announcements and news notes. Consequently, the scope and content of the newsletter can change also. For example, should the **Guest Feature** section that appears in this issue continue as a regular part of the newsletter? If you have thoughts or suggestions about how to change things, please do not hesitate contacting the editor.

Articles in the Next Issue

The Summer issue will include new **Reports from the Field** and more. Look for the next issue to appear in late July.

Newsletter Distribution

The method for distributing this newsletter is as a Word document sent as an attachment to an e-mail message to the subscription list maintained by the editors. The distribution figure is currently more than 100 people. Following the distribution to roundtable's membership the issue is turned into a .pdf file for placement on the roundtable's web site.

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